

# The Tottering Hapsburg Throne

## Dissension in Austria, Due to Food Shortage, Political Racial Situation and Defeat on the Piave, Brightens Allies' Hopes



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Public attention the world over is concentrated upon Austria at this time, the crushing defeat administered upon the Piave by the Italians and the internal dissensions within the empire opening up a prospect of the certain weakening of Germany's principal ally to such an extent as to have a material effect upon the general military situation.

For the defeat in the field and the conditions at home the political and food supply situations, obviously related, are in large measure responsible. The resignation of Von Seydler, the Austrian Premier, and the proffer of the portfolio to Bahnhaus, a nonentity, are proof that the Hapsburg reign is tottering.

In view of this situation the two following authentic views are presented, the one dealing with the politico-racial schism and the other presenting the latest and most reliable figures as to food.

**T**HAT the Dual Empire, tyrannized with coarse brutality and undisguised contempt by Prussia and overwhelmingly defeated during the past week or ten days by Italy, torn asunder by racial strife and with the hunger stricken masses rising everywhere against the Government, is face to face with hopeless ruin and in the incipient stages of a general revolution is abundantly clear from the despatches and from the other communications which reach us through Switzerland, through Holland and through Scandinavia, from Berlin and from Vienna.

### Outlook Never Was More Hopeless.

Never, indeed, has the outlook of a sovereign State been so utterly hopeless and desperate as that of the Hapsburg monarchy. In many respects it is even worse than that of what was formerly known as the Land of the Czars. For despite the indescribable chaos and anarchy which prevail there we are all of us convinced that Russia will eventually recover from the present afflictions and "come back," to develop into the greatest possible field of international trade and industry.

There is still a future for Russia. There is none in sight for Austria-Hungary. It is fated to dismemberment from without and to disruption from within, while even in the utterly inconceivable defeat of the Powers of the Entente it would be doomed to the most cruel form of political and economic servitude to Berlin.

There are certain features which have not figured in the despatches or printed letters, but which it is necessary to know in order to understand the present situation in the Dual Empire. Among them is the attitude of the aristocracy. The latter occupies an altogether exceptional position in the

Twin Monarchies. It owns most of the land. It retains all sorts of feudal prerogatives and privileges. It may be said to monopolize all the great offices of state and most of the minor ones as well.

Metternich was wont to declare in the first half of the nineteenth century that "der Mensch fangt nur vom Baron an" (mankind only begins from the rank of Baron upward), and in spite of all the progress of democracy conditions in Austria-Hungary, in this respect at any rate, remain very much the same. The entire government of the country has therefore been in the hands of the patriciate, and when any man from the bourgeoisie or from the masses succeeded in spite of all the handicaps due to his birth in making his voice heard in the land he was quickly ennobled so as to identify him with the interests of the aristocratic class.

### Nobles in a Close Corporation.

The nobles are about the only class of the people with which the reigning house of Hapsburg has ever come into contact. To be a member of their entourage or of their household, or even to be admitted to court, has necessitated the possession of a number of generations of exclusively patrician forbears, both on the side of the father and of the mother, and free from any bourgeois strain. Society at Vienna, and in only a very much slighter degree at Budapest, has been restricted to those men and women genealogically qualified to appear at court, who may be said to have formed a close corporation the portals of which were guarded with the utmost jealousy—so jealously that not even the favor of the sovereign could secure entry for those lacking the requisite quantum of blue blood.

In past reigns this aristocracy has constituted the chief bulwark of the Crown, all of the officers of the crack regiments of the army being recruited from its ranks. No matter what the racial differences between the nobles of German-speaking Austria, of Bohemia, of Hungary, of Galicia (Austrian Poland) or even Croatia might be, they were all united in their loyalty and devotion to the House of Hapsburg.

When Maria Teresa found herself confronted by Frederick the Great of Prussia in the Seven Years War the Magyar magnates rallied to her support and vowed to die for their sovereign. And so it was in all the crises by which the dynasty was confronted in after years until the very beginning of the present reign. No matter what the grounds of complaint the nobles of the various races comprised in the Dual Empire might have against the Governments or the Parliaments at Vienna and at Budapest, they were all devoted to the Hapsburgs and faithful to the interests of the reigning house.

To-day conditions are entirely changed. The hold which the Crown had upon the aristocracy has passed away. Emperor Charles, from whom so much was hoped both at home and abroad at the outset of his reign, has entirely forfeited the confidence and good will of the nobility, which was the chief support of all his predecessors on the throne, and has failed to win the good will of the bourgeoisie and of the masses.

When he solemnly denied on oath the authorship of the letter in his own handwriting addressed to his brother-in-law, Prince Sixtus of Bourbon, for presentation to President Poincaré, admitting the justice of the claims of France to her lost provinces of Alsace and Lorraine, and then tried to wriggle out by attributing the missive first of all to his wife's mother, the wonderfully clever widowed Duchess of Parma, and then to the Empress's father confessor, imputing to them forgery and endeavoring to hide behind the folds of the petticoats of the one and of the cassock of the other, he sacrificed every remaining vestige of the respect in which by reason of his ancestry and of the traditions of his house he had until then retained on the part of his nobles. It is no exaggeration to assert that he then wrote himself down as a coward and as a perjurer.

### Resented Karl's Letter to Prince Sixtus.

Premier Clemenceau's sensational publication of the letter addressed by Emperor Charles to his brother-in-law, Prince Sixtus of Bourbon, on the subject of Alsace-Lorraine was followed three days afterward by a meeting of the great nobles of the German-speaking provinces of Austria at the Vienna palace of Prince Maximilian Fuerstenberg in the Giselastrasse in response to his invitation.

Prince Fuerstenberg after a temporary eclipse in the good graces of the Kaiser, due to his unfortunate industrial and mercantile ventures in connection with the so-called "Princes' Trust" at Berlin prior to the war, stands now higher than ever in the favor of William of Hohenzollern, and is once more his most intimate friend and crony. At the same time he is his personal and unofficial representative at Vienna. He is qualified for this position by reason of the fact that like so many of the great nobles of the German-speaking provinces of Austria his territorial possessions are as large in the monarchies of Germany as they are in the Dual Empire. They have seats in the House of Lords at Vienna and at Berlin, hold commissions in both